

Note:

The Comms Kit is a document created by the Assembly Team (MASS LBP) and developed in coordination with the Communications Departments of the City of Victoria and District of Saanich for their use in promoting the events and updates of the Citizens' Assembly to the broader public. Each Comms Kit includes a date on which it was considered approved by all parties and ready for use. Questions about the Comms Kits can be directed to the Assembly Team at info@victoriasaanich.ca

Victoria–Saanich Citizens' Assembly (VSCA)

Digital Communications Plan: Phase IV

November 5, 2024

Attn:

City of Victoria: Amy Bronee

District of Saanich: Kelsie McLeod

Background

Over the past decade, the City of Victoria and District of Saanich have considered whether they should amalgamate and become one municipality. During the 2018 General and Local School Board Elections, both municipalities asked a "Community Opinion Question" to gauge public support to establish a Citizens' Assembly to study the issue and reach consensus on a recommendation. The question asked voters whether they were in favour of establishing a "Citizens' Assembly to explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages" of amalgamation. Voters in both municipalities supported this proposal and now, after being delayed by the pandemic, the Citizens' Assembly is proceeding.

The Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation is a deliberative process intended to allow regional residents to actively participate in developing and evaluating the case for amalgamating the City of Victoria and District of Saanich. Residents will consider the costs, benefits and disadvantages of an amalgamation of the municipalities. The Citizens' Assembly will be an impartial advisory body charged by both councils to provide detailed consensus recommendations concerning the proposed amalgamation.

Forty-eight (48) randomly selected area residents will serve on the Assembly, meeting over eight day-long sessions between September 2024 and April 2025. Members of the public will be invited to make submissions to the Assembly and attend special roundtable meetings. The Assembly will submit its final report to both councils in June 2025. The Assembly will work to represent all residents and exemplify high standards of transparency, accountability and robust civic participation.

Objectives of Phase IV

- Re-introduce the Citizens' Assembly to the public
- Promote the two [Public Meetings](#) (Nov 20 and 21)
- Alert the public to the Assembly [website](#), resources, and other ways to get involved

Target Audiences

- Victoria and Saanich residents

Strategy

- Synchronize timing and use consistent messaging across Victoria and Saanich communication channels
- Direct all comments and questions re: Citizens' Assembly to MASS LBP

Special Considerations

The decision to amalgamate has far-reaching consequences and many people have strong opinions and feelings about it on both sides of the issue. There is the possibility that social media posts related to the Citizens' Assembly and amalgamation could attract a significant number of negative comments and interactions. There are advantages and disadvantages to disabling the comments on social media posts to prevent this.

Pros

- Prevents amplification of negative, inaccurate or inflammatory statements.
- Provides a safe space where users can get factual information.
- Reduces staff time to monitor, respond and moderate comments.

Cons

- Risk to corporate reputation by appearing closed to dialogue or unwilling to hear from the public.
- Diverges from standard corporate practice.
- The act of disabling comments could overshadow the content and become the story.
- Without engagement to boost the post via the algorithm, the posts may reach less people.

Recommendation: Leave commenting enabled.

Given that this is an important opportunity to communicate about the Assembly, it is recommended to proceed as usual and closely monitor the responses to determine if the approach needs to be changed.

Specifically, the following is recommended:

- Proactively direct questions and comments to MASS LBP in initial posts.
- Explicitly state that City of Victoria and District of Saanich are not directly involved with the Victoria–Saanich Citizens' Assembly.

- Provide a heads up to staff responsible for monitoring the page about the possible inflammatory nature of the issue.
- Follow internal comment moderation policy and use platform moderation tools as needed.
- Designate a senior comms staff for the social media moderator to connect with for timely advice and direction regarding any inappropriate comments or an overwhelming number of responses.
- Prepare a standardized response to ensure consistency between Victoria and Saanich accounts (see below).
- Connect Victoria and Saanich social media staff to each other so they have quick and easy access to confer on any issues that arise.

This decision may need to be revisited depending on the type of engagement the initial posts generate. If it is determined that commenting needs to be disabled in the future, it will be important to explain the reasons for this in advance of turning off the function and to offer alternative ways for the public to share their feedback.

Key Messages

- The [Victoria–Saanich Citizens’ Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation](#) is a unique exercise in municipal democracy in which members will explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages of an amalgamation of the City of Victoria and District of Saanich.
- The Citizens’ Assembly was commissioned by the elected councils of both municipalities, and supported by a public referendum which took place in 2018.
- MASS LBP is running the Victoria–Saanich Citizens’ Assembly at arm’s-length from both municipalities to safeguard the independence of the process.
- All comments and questions related to the Victoria–Saanich Citizens’ Assembly should be directed to info@victoriasaanich.ca or via phone at 1-833-319-1901.

Tactics

Date	ACTIVITY	AUDIENCE	RESPONSIBLE	NOTES
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Nov 7	Facebook LinkedIn Twitter	Victoria and Saanich residents	Victoria Saanich	See text below and use images provided by MASS LBP
Nov 18	Facebook Twitter LinkedIn	Victoria and Saanich residents	Victoria Saanich	See text below and use images provided by MASS LBP

IMAGES: [Click here to access a Google Drive with images](#)

TEXT FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

NOV 7

Twitter/X (thread)

The Victoria–Saanich Citizens’ Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation is hosting 2 Public Meetings this month: Nov 20 online and Nov 21 at the Victoria Conference Centre at Crystal Garden. Sign up at victoriasaanich.ca/2024-public-meetings #citizensassembly #victoria #saanich #VSCA

[in reply to above]

Come learn about the Assembly’s work, meet some of the 48 Assembly members from Victoria and Saanich who were selected by lottery to participate, hear what others think, and share your perspectives on amalgamation and the future of the region.

[in reply to above]

Sign up for Assembly updates to receive copies of presentations, reports, meeting summaries and other resources, so you can follow the Assembly’s work and be informed about the issues. Sign up at victoriasaanich.ca/contact.

Facebook

The Victoria–Saanich Citizens’ Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation is hosting 2 Public Meetings this month: Wednesday November 20 (online via Zoom) and Thursday November 21 at the Victoria Conference Centre at Crystal Garden.

All residents are welcome to come and learn about the Assembly’s work, meet some of the 48 Assembly members from Victoria and Saanich who were selected by

lottery to participate, hear what others think, and share your perspectives on amalgamation and the future of the region.

➡ Sign up at victoriasaanich.ca/2024-public-meetings

#citizensassembly #victoria #saanich #VSCA

LinkedIn

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#citizensassembly #victoria #saanich #VSCA

TEXT FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

NOVEMBER 18

IMAGES: [Click here to access a Google Drive with images](#)

Facebook

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The Citizens' Assembly is tasked with exploring the costs, benefits and disadvantages of amalgamation between the two municipalities and making a recommendation to Councils next spring. Include your voice in the process by attending a public meeting.

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#citizensassembly #victoria #saanich #VSCA

Twitter/X

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#citizensassembly #victoria #saanich #VSCA

STANDARD RESPONSE

<The City of Victoria/District of Saanich> is not directly involved in the Victoria–Saanich Citizens' Assembly. MASS LBP is running the Assembly at arms-length from both municipalities to safeguard the independence of the process.

Visit victoriasaanich.ca to learn more about the Assembly process and mandate, key dates and events, and how you can be involved.

All comments and questions related to the Victoria–Saanich Citizens' Assembly should be directed to info@victoriasaanich.ca or via phone at 1-833-319-1901.